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The Muslim Voice

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APRIL 2002 VOLUME 8 ISSUE 5 MUHARRAM 1423

All Muslims are like the component parts of a foundation, strengthening the other...

... in such a way must they support each other...

The Holy Prophet (SAW)

JOURNEY TO ISLAM
p.10

THE HISTORY OF THE KA'BAH
p.13

WHY STUDY ISLAM?
p.22

SHOULD THE US BOMB OTHER NATIONS?
p. 23

RAMADAN IN MADINA
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President's Message

Bismillah, wassalato wassalamo alaa Rasoolillah,

Assalamo Aleikom, Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Finally, I get to write the last President's message after a long year! *Alhamdulillah*...and a sigh of relief! :-) First, I ask Allah (SWT) to accept all our efforts this year and forgive us our mistakes. I was truly fortunate to have this opportunity to spend time and effort in the cause of Allah (SWT) and in the service of all Muslims on our campus. And I praise Allah (SWT) for blessing us with the excellent team of execs this year, and a wonderful group of volunteers, without whom this year wouldn't have been the same. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you all! *Jazakum Allaho khayran*! May Allah(SWT) reward us all amply for our efforts in this life and the next! I hope I've made a difference in your life as much as you've made a difference in mine.

To me, ever since I got actively involved with the MSA, I couldn't stop. Until last year, I realised: "Warning: the MSA will take up any time you're willing to offer." Meaning, there's always more that can be done with the MSA to make the campus-life of Muslim students more comfortable, rewarding and fulfilling, and to invite everyone to the religion of the Truth.

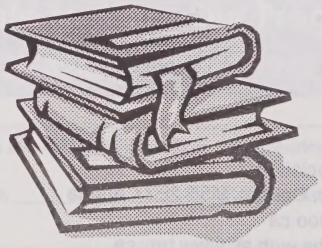
Everyone needs to find their good balance between study, MSA/volunteer activity, sports, silah (reaching out to your family/relatives/friends), rest, etc...and it's this message I'd like to give next year's execs and volunteers *insha'Allah* (which I hope covers everyone!). May Allah (SWT) give all of us the wisdom to achieve this balance.

And now as exams approach, everyone's time should be tilted towards studying hard and reviewing the (seemingly) enormous amounts of material that was covered in class. May Allah(SWT) give us *tawfeeq* in our tests and exams. Insha'Allah we can learn from our mistakes no matter how we do.

Lastly, I'd like to make a small request from everyone. Insha'Allah, make plans for the summer and set goals. As one gets older, and responsibilities pile up, time seems to pass by more quickly. The summer is an excellent opportunity for us to reorganize our thoughts, and catch up on things that we couldn't fit into our schedule properly throughout the year. Please take time to: spend quality time with your family and friends; get educated about Islam (take a summer course or something!), and more importantly, try to make sure you're implementing what you already know and monitor your progress; read Quran, understand it and memorise some *surahs* (chapters); play sports!; volunteer in the community; visit friends you haven't seen for a long time; and so on...Don't let the summer laziness conquer you into wasting any time - make your own list right after exams!

May Allah (SWT) forgive me if I said anything wrong, and please forgive me if I ever offended you in anyway. *Jazakum Allaho khayran* for your patience with me.

Wassalamo Aleikom,
Ahmed Abdelkhalek



Message from The Muslim Voice

Dear Readers, *Assalam Alaikum*,

"We are stardust." Literally. Each element of our body finds its origin at the center of a star, as does almost every element of the universe. *Subhan-Allah!* The very unity of our existence points to the oneness of Allah.

It is not often that one is reminded of one's place in the larger whole. I experienced a similar sentiment this year, at the 175th anniversary of our university.

175 long years – of which we are here for only a few. With my time at the University of Toronto drawing to a close, I am filled with nostalgia and sadness, coupled with anticipation of a welcome change. However, before moving forward, one turns back to take a last, enduring look – a look at the meaningful places left behind, and treasured faces, some never to be seen again. In retrospect, one realizes that, just like a star, all that will be left of us is the light that we spread. Once each of us has completed our brief term here at university, all we leave behind is what we gave of ourselves, and the contributions we made to the lives of those we encountered.

This is the last issue of TMV for this academic year, and my last as Editor. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the wonderful staff of TMV for being so cooperative throughout this time, and contributing so wholeheartedly to this magazine. To me, you have been a constant support and may Allah reward you for your efforts.

To the readers of TMV, I sincerely hope that this year's issues of TMV have reached your expectations and have touched you in some small way. On behalf of our staff, I offer our apologies for any flaws or delays in the publication. As always, your inputs, comments and criticisms are always welcome. I also ask our staff, the MSA executive and all those whom I have worked with to forgive me for any weaknesses on my part. My experience with the MSA and as editor has been extremely rewarding *alhumdulillah*, and I am lucky to have worked with such dedicated and inspiring individuals.

As intellectual Muslims in a foreign country, we represent a minority and must express our values and ideas. Within this capacity, *The Muslim Voice* has amazing potential as a forum for creative expression. One of the first verses revealed to the Prophet (SAW) reflect the power of the pen: "He Who taught (the use of) the pen. Taught man that which he knew not." (96:4-5) Thus, I urge all of TMV's readers to utilize and recognize the expressive potential of this publication and continue contributing to TMV in the years to come. During the elections for TMV Editor, it was incredibly touching to hear the ambitious ideas that people had to offer regarding TMV. We have so much to say, so much to learn, so much to understand. Through this magazine, we can do that collectively, as united Muslim students. Thus, as I move on, I leave it in the hands of you, TMV's readers and the coming staff, to carry this magazine to greater heights and explore its possibilities. This is indeed a responsibility and a sacred trust. For my part, I hope that I have played a small role in establishing a firm role. I trust that you will take it further *insha'Allah*.

In closing, I would like to announce that next year's TMV Editor is Noor Javed. Congratulations, and I wish you all the best.

With that, I sign off. *Jazakum Allahu Khairan.*

W'assalam Alaikum,
Farah I. Khan,
Editor, *The Muslim Voice*

"All this immensity of matter constitutes scope for the self-realization of the spirit."
Muhammad Iqbal, National Poet of Pakistan

If you have any comments about TMV, we would like to hear from you at muslimvoice@yahoo.ca

TMV also welcomes your submissions for upcoming issues. Send your poetry, short stories, articles, letters, sketches, jokes, and whatever else you can think of to us at muslimvoice@yahoo.ca.

ANNOUNCEMENT!

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Current Events

Muslims massacred by Hindu fanatics

India's human rights chief slammed government officials for their handling of the nation's worst religious riots in a decade, saying that a western state was "far from normal" three weeks after clashes between Hindus and Muslims.

The assessment by former Supreme Court Chief Justice J.S. Verma came as more violence was reported in the western state of Gujarat. Three people were stabbed and one died of her wounds in Ahmadabad, the state's largest city, Press Trust of India reported. No other details were available. More than 700 people — mostly Muslims, India's largest minority group — have been killed since late February, when an attack by a Muslim mob on a train carrying Hindu nationalists touched off long-smoldering religious tensions. Most of the deaths occurred in the days after the train attack as Hindus hunted down Muslims in retaliation. "Three weeks or more is a long enough time for complete normalcy ... I did not see that anywhere," Verma told a news conference after returning from Gujarat.

A Muslim mob set a passenger train on fire in the town of Godhra on Feb. 27 after harassment by Hindu activists returning from the disputed Ayodha Mosque, killing 60 people. Reprisals began immediately in a systematic fashion. "When Godhra happened, did or did you not anticipate an escalation?" Verma said, referring to Gujarat's state government, run by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's party.

Afghan quake leaves 2,000 dead and 30,000 homeless

New tremors shook northern Afghanistan after hindering international aid agencies arriving in the area where a massive earthquake on Monday, Mar 25 killed more than 2,000 people, injured 4,000 others and left another 30,000 homeless. The aftershocks, including one that measured 5.4, rumbled through the villages in the foothills of the snow-capped Hindu Kush mountains, where Monday's earthquake flattened towns and villages. The Afghan government has described the quakes as a "catastrophe" and said they feared the final death toll may be as high as 5,000.

The regional capital of Nahrin was torn apart by the tremors, with about 1,500 homes reported to be destroyed. Rescue workers, using thewir bae hands, dug out hundreds of bodies from the city and surrounding villages still shaking from continuing aftershocks. The area most hit – which is about 90 miles north of the capital, Kabul – and its 85,000 inhabitants

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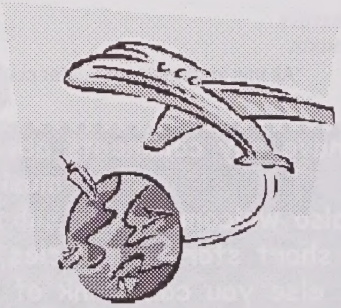

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Current Events

were already suffering from drought and food shortages. Aid workers said relief facilities would be overwhelmed by the disaster. Food, medicine, warm clothing and tents were among supplies swept away.

Florida Mosque Attack Result of Anti-Muslim Rhetoric

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a Washington-based Islamic advocacy group, today said an attack March 25 on a Florida mosque is likely the result of the current barrage of anti-Muslim rhetoric by right-wing commentators who paint Islam as a violent faith bent on world domination. At 7:30 p.m. on Monday, a pick-up truck was driven into the front of the Islamic Center of Tallahassee. The man driving the truck, 51-year-old Charles D. Franklin of Tallahassee, was arrested and charged with burglary and criminal mischief. Authorities are treating the incident as a hate crime because of statements

Franklin allegedly made after the attack. A police news release issued today said Franklin was motivated by "hatred of Muslims" and told officers he could have blown up the mosque if he had put propane tanks on the front of his truck. He also said he tried to join the military in order to "kill Muslims."

Discord overshadows Arab summit

Major disagreements have erupted among delegates at the Arab summit in Beirut, threatening the endorsement of a Saudi Arabian peace initiative for the Middle East.

Although there appeared to be general backing for the plan, disagreements erupted over Lebanon's blocking of a speech that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was due to deliver via a satellite link from the West Bank.

The Palestinian delegation at the summit walked out in protest on Wednesday, while the United Arab Emirates announced it was reducing the level of its delegation in solidarity with the Palestinians.

Following lengthy negotiations, the Palestinians later agreed they would rejoin the summit on Thursday after assurances that a recording of Mr Arafat's speech would be transmitted.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak told reporters in Cairo that he had made a sudden decision to stay away to show solidarity with Mr Arafat. Others suggests this is a clear sign from the Egyptians of their discomfort with the Saudis taking over the traditionaly Egyptian role of playig peacemaker in the Middle East.

Following Criticism of Targeting Minorities, Bush Nominates Arab American to Head NIH

In the wake of human rights groups reports of unfair targeting of minorities in the United States, U.S. President George W. Bush nominated an Algerian-born doctor and a Hispanic former green beret to America's two most powerful positions in medicine.

Dr. Elias Zerhouni, who arrived in Washington from Algeria in 1975 with a young wife and $300 to his name, is to take the number two U.S. health position as head of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the nation's largest biomedical research agency, which controls a budget of $23 billion. His nomination also requires Senate approval. Zerhouni, a radiologist and biomedical engineer, was previously head of radiology and serves as executive vice-dean at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

Zerhouni is one of only a handful of Arab Americans that have been appointed to top government positions. The top Arab American currently serving in an appointed position is U.S. Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham, a former Michigan Senator of Lebanese descent.

Arab Journalists Protest Planned Al-Jazeera Interview With Sharon

Around 150 Arab journalists covering the Arab summit protested Tuesday, March 26, against efforts by Qatari-based Al-Jazeera television channel to organize an interview with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, news agencies reported.

The head of the Al-Jazeera team at the summit, Said Shouly, told Agence France-Presse (AFP) that his company in Doha obtained Sharon's permission two days ago to arrange an interview but then cancelled it when his office imposed too many conditions. He announced that the decision to cancel the interview had been taken as up to 150 Arab journalists gathered in protest outside his makeshift office at the summit press center.

"We cancelled the interview because the Israelis imposed conditions," such as on the type of questions that could be asked, he told AFP later.

"We've been trying for a few months to interview him," he said. "He sent his approval two days ago." In Doha, presenter Mohammad Krishen said, "we apologize for the cancellation of the interview," with Sharon. "Israeli officials sought to impose technical conditions ... which our management refused," he added.

In January 2001, former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak was interviewed by Al Jazeera along with three Palestinian officials.

For more news from around the Muslim world, updated hourly, visit *The Muslim Voice Online* at http://www.tmv.ca

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Gender Equity In Islam

On February 16, OISE auditorium was filled with a lively hum of U of T students excited at the arrival of Dr. Ingrid Mattson, vice-president of the Islamic Society of North America, who would address the controversial topic, 'Gender Equity in Islam.'

Sister Huda Khattab began the evening by laying an excellent foundation of the tenets of Islam regarding the rights and roles of women. She addressed many common misperceptions, making it patently clear that in Islam, women and men are of equal merit in terms of human worth.

Although the role of men is seen as being primarily in the public sphere, while women's is principally to cultivate the minds of a resilient future Ummah(community), their performance of complementary roles is essential to building strong families, and ultimately, a good society. Yet women must also fulfill the obligation each Muslim has, to become educated, both in worldly and religious knowledge. They are encouraged enter the workforce as teachers, doctors, social workers, writers (the list goes on) since there is a vast need for women in these fields. Men and women are to be raiment for one another, equal partners, companions and helpers who assist each other in gaining Allah's (*subhanahu Ta'ala*) esteem.

Sister Huda stressed that hijab (head cover) must extend beyond modest dress. It is, rather, a respectful attitude to be evinced by both men and women alike. It serves not only to elevate the status all parties and neutralize any advantage of one over the other but also prevents either male or female from having an unfair "edge" by using one's body, rather than superior moral characteristics to achieve one's ends. Moreover, the fact that women have been inalienably granted by Allah (*subhanahu Ta'ala*) many of the rights they have struggled for centuries to attain, proved quite shocking to many feminists. That there is no need in Islam for 'the battle of the sexes,' raised coiffed eyebrows to new heights.

Dr. Mattson began by reminding us that the goal of all Muslims should be to "develop a natural propensity for gratefulness to God in society," through our everyday actions. She advised that in the West we must examine more critically our own society's flaws. Foremost, our emphasis on visibility and the "being seen is being known dilemma." The superficiality of this outlook is disliked in Islam since all people, be they male or female, should be known by their conduct, not their image or other caste delineations. Excessive objectification of women is known to have harmful effects, yet this is overlooked by self-serving industries and the media. Dr. Mattson asked for our definition of oppression. Should it be broadened to include discontent and bombardment by icons that lead women to mutilate themselves in pursuit of youth and beauty, at a time when they should garner love and respect for a lifetime of dedication to those around them?

Ideals of personal freedom were found to be dependent on, and deeply linked to the values a society holds. As a small example, if the State tried to make the use of motorcycle helmets mandatory in Texas, there would likely be an uproar at the government's impediments on personal freedom. Yet in Canada we find this is perfectly acceptable. Our socialization within a public health care system makes us receptive to the rule of law to dictate what is in our personal interest. In the same way, the structural divides between Muslim societies and the West must not be exoticised, but discussed openly to promote acceptance and understanding.

In a final note, Dr. Mattson mentioned the way that ISNA, like many other Muslim organizations has overcome vast cultural (not religious) barriers that prevented women from advancing within them. The concept of Shura, or counsel among all members of society, which ensures that vital perspectives are not overlooked, has been increasingly implemented, as exemplified by her role as ISNA's Vice-President and spokeswoman. "The Muslim community," avowed Mattson, "is very receptive to making positive changes." "The West," she urged, "must reciprocate, because there is a lot we can learn from each other, to our mutual benefit."

Fatima Butt, 2nd Year,

Sisterz Talentz Nite

On February 15th, sisters, mothers, grandmothers and friends gathered at the MacLeod Auditorium to enjoy an evening of sisterz-only fun. Sisterz Talent Night, produced annually by University students from across the GTA, was certainly an evening to remember.

Spicy Erindale sisters served as our ever informed MCs. York MSA's sitcom theme-song parodies initiated things by helping everyone feel welcome. Hilarious skits were accompanied by excellent suggestions for self-betterment, like renting-A-Mullah to point out all your flaws (now I'm a believer) and carrying around a stick of butter in your sweatshirt to be cool (yo Macun Munda!). Ryerson gave us a glimpse into the unique lives of sisters in University, and certainly made the mothers wonder.

Besides fun, there was the chance to expand our intellectual horizons through ingenious scientific descriptions of how to make sheep fly and how to blow up laboratories. Even breaks.. planned of course..were packed to the max with audience entertainment. There were load of games where everyone was a winner. And the kids taught us the fine craft of making toilet paper wedding dresses (who knows? These skills might come in handy in the future). Skilled dancers performed thrilling feats of coordination (CODE RED!) and exotic jungle moves (SweetChilliPeppas ...ssss).

The extraordinary fashions of sisters from different cultural backgrounds made everyone grateful for the diverse beauty of garments we can all enjoy together because of the inclusivity of the Islam, which unifies us in kindness and mercy.

From fantastic food to revelations of exceptional abilities in some of our closest friends, Sisterz Talent Nite proved, once again, to be an outstanding success. You go girls!

Andaleeb Mustaq& Fatima Butt

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Eid Dinner 2002

Following the theme of 'One Ummah, One Eid', the Muslim Students' Associations in the Greater Toronto Area at Mississasauga ,Ryerson, Scarborough, Toronto and York arranged the first united Eid-Ul-Adha dinner at the Taj Banquet Hall.

The event took place on Friday, March 8, 2002. The guest of honour was Suhaib Webb, who had just arrived at the dinner after returning from Hajj. There were a great deal of people from the different campuses and that made the event a memorable one. The speech delivered by Suhaib Webb was very interactive and was targeted at the Muslim youth. After the speech, people broke for food, which was a great treat, and everyone enjoyed the dinner.

The entertainment part was taken care of by Ryerson. Prizes were given away to students at the five campuses for their involvement with the MSA and the promotion of its cause.

The Eid Dinner was a break for everyone from a busy week of school. Truly, it was a blessed Eid atmosphere, as people met up with old friends and made some new. The dinner ended with a prayer, and left everyone with a pleasant note.

Humairah Irfan
First Year, Chemical Engineering
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Good Moral Values

In one verse, Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* refers to the Qur'an's feature of leading mankind out of darkness into light.

... A light has come to you from Allah and a Clear Book. By it, Allah guides those who follow what pleases Him to the ways of peace. He will bring them from the darkness to the light by His permission, and guide them to a straight path. (Surat al Ma'ida: 15-16)

As university students, we're always on the run, meeting deadlines for assignments, cramming for midterms, and other activities at home and school. Sometimes the workload becomes too much and we find ourselves going astray. It becomes imperative to balance between our social and school life, and for that we need good moral values. A conscience to help us think straight and tell right from wrong. Stature that impedes temptation and wastage of time. And calibre that commands our words when we speak.

One of the important aspects of conscience is that it is the inspiration of Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*. It is common to all. In other words, under a given situation two people will have the same opinion about right and wrong. The conscience of one person never falls out with that of another. Through the conscience, Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) alerts us about the best and the most merited behaviour and manners, which it will please Him for us to adopt.

That conscience is an inspiration from Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) is mentioned in the Qur'an, in Surat ash-Shams:

"And the self and what proportioned it and inspired it with depravity or taqwa, he who purifies it has succeeded; he who covers it up has failed." (Surat ash-Shams: 7-10)

Occasionally we face troubles and physical and spiritual sorrows in this world. These feelings are so intense that they cannot be compared with any other physical pain. We regret taking certain decisions and they begin to haunt us.

However, we are believers. We should have absolute faith in the fact that events take place by Allah's (*subhana wa ta'ala*) will, and whatever befalls them does so by Allah's (*subhana wa ta'ala*) will. We need to put our unyielding trust in Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*), at good times, in trouble or when we make a mistake. Upon making a mistake, we should immediately purify ourselves, repent with sincerity and seek Allah's (*subhana wa ta'ala*) forgiveness, and to give us the strength that will prevent us from repeating our mistakes. And then we will find ourselves spared of this long-lived feeling of regret. This should increase our enthusiasm, devotion, and religious zeal and wrench us away from the spiral of apprehension and depression.

In the Qur'an Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) apprises us about the various kinds of righteous deeds. Communicating the message of Islam to people, striving for the prosperity and the benefit of the Muslims, trying to attain a better understanding of the Qur'an, solving every kind of personal and social problem of the Muslims; all these are important righteous deeds. The fundamental Islamic forms of worship, praying to Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*), fasting, spending for the cause of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*), and the pilgrimage to Mecca are also among the important righteous deeds:

"Righteousness does not consist in whether you turn your faces towards the east or the west; what is righteous is to believe in Allah and the last day, and the angels, and the Book, and the messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which you have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and in times of war. Such as do so are people of truth. Such are the Allah-fearing." (Al-Baqara, 177)

Humairah Irfan
First Year
Chemical Engineering
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"The scholars of the heart say that it is from the greatest obstacles that befall a person traveling to Allah that his means become his goals."

-As-Sayyid Al-Habib 'Ali Al-Jifry

The Big Four

Within Islam there lie many different sects with the common ground of testifying 'There is only one God and Prophet Mohammed (*PBUH*) is the last Messenger'. The majority of Muslims world-wide would be classified as 'Sunni Muslims', as they follow the Qur'an and example of the Prophet (*PBUH*) known as the '*sunnah*'. However within the Sunni's there are four different schools of thoughts known as the '*madhabs*'; Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal. These schools of thought are all viewed as correct and one will never come across any difference of opinions as far as basic principals are concerned. They mainly differ in regards to "tiny branches" of theology rather than the fundamental principals. It is about these differences that Prophet Muhammed (*PBUH*) has said: "Differences of opinion is (a form of) blessing."

Below is a brief history of these schools of thought.

Imam Abu Hanifah:

-First to be founded by Nu'man bin Thabi bin Zuta bin Mah

-Historian Khatib of Baghdad says that Abu Hanifah was born in year 80 A.H. (after Hijrah)

-He was first brought up as a trader like his ancestors, but soon after he started taking a deep interest in education.

-After completing his education in Kufah and Basrah he went to Makkah and Medina and enrolled as a student of the famous scholar 'Ata bin Abi Rabah Abdallah bin Umar (the son of Caliph Umar).

-He attached himself to many teachers and attended many schools in order to acquaint himself with different principal methods so that by a comparative study of them he could arrive at some system of his own.

-He used to learn Hadith from Imam Malik and attend his lectures.

-His fame increased as a great scholar with intellectual gifts and originality.

-His students came from all over the Muslim world.

-In the Islamic month of Rajab 150 A.H he died due to the effect of poison while he was saying his prayers. His *Janazah* (funeral prayer) was performed six times, each time with fifty thousand people.

-Imam Abu Hanifah left a large number of disciples behind him.

Imam Malik Bin Anas:

-He was born in 93 A.H.

-Belonged to a royal Arab family of Humair from Yemen which settled in Medina after the advent of Islam.

-His family was known as scholars and teachers in Islamic learning. His grandfather was a famous scholar of Hadith (sayings of the Prophet [*PBUH*]), to be one of the authentic narrators of Ahadith and was alive until Imam Malik reached ten years of age.

-His fame reached far, that scholars from across the Muslim world considered it a great privilege to listen to his lessons.

-Around 1300 scholars came to learn by Imam Malik.

-His greatest contribution was the collection of Median Fiqh (jurisprudence)

-Imam Malik died in the Islamic month of Rabi al-Awwal on the 11th in the year 179 A.H. at the age of 86 and was buried in Jannat al Baqi in Medina.

Imam Muhammad Idris al-Shafi'i:

-It is said to be he was either be born in Gaza, in a small town by the Mediterranean Sea or near Gaza, in the year 150 A.H/767 AD

-He belonged to the tribe of Quraish hence being a descendant of Prophet Mohammed (*PBUH*).

-After his father died, his mother took him to Palestine and lived with a Yamenic tribe to which her ancestors belonged. She later went to Mekkah with Al- Shafi'i when he was 10 years old.

-He was a very intelligent child who was excellent in memorizing thing, eloquent in speech, very good in poetry and the Arabic language. He was always keen to learn traditional Islamic sciences.

-At the age of seven he memorized the Qur'an and at the age of 15 he memorized the complete Al-Muwatta (Imam Malik's work)

-He then went to Medina and studied with Imam Malik till the age of 22 when Imam Malik died.

-When the governor of Yemen visited Medina he was so impressed by Imam Shafi'i that he persuaded him to take up a government position as and administrator. That unfortunately brought Al Shafi'i some hardship due to his straight forwardness and was deported to Iraq in heavy chains.

-He was later pardoned as he successfully defended himself.

-In Baghdad he had the opportunity to learn Hanafi school of thought.

-In the year 188 A.H he moved to Egypt via Harrian, Syria and Mekkah.

-Later he returned to Baghdad (194 A.H) for four years and left at age of 50.Then went to Egypt.

-He died in Cario, Egypt on the last day of the Islamic month, Rajab in year 204 A.H. Some say he died a few days after being attacked after one of his lectures. Others say he suffered from serious intestinal illness and died because of it.

-Imam Al- Shafi'i made such a great impact on Islamic jurisprudence that the Shafi'i school is named after him.

...continued on page 26

MY JOURNEY TO ISLAM

"Conversion from Nowhere"

By Sa'ad Laws

I have often been asked how I came to Islam. I mean, it isn't too often you see a white guy from "cow country" turn to Islam. I guess the most amazing thing about the whole thing is where I started. Now, I am not one of those stories of brothers who you hear were in gangs, addicted to crack, or worshiped devils at stone altars. I come from quite a typical background. I have two sisters; a brother; and both my parents are still married. My father is an engineer; while my mother is a housewife (or domestic engineer, as she likes to say) and we are as middle-class as you can get. My family lives in a small country hamlet, just to the south of nowhere. To give you a glimpse of how rural it is, there is a general store about a mile from my house, where the lady who runs it say "ya'll come back now, ya hear" when ever you leave the store.

Religion was always a strange subject in my house. My father is an Irish-Catholic by birth and my mom is a Methodist. We went to church on occasion, but for the most part, religion was a "spiritual" matter that you just had in your heart. I can remember as a kid looking at a small figurine of Jesus (which I had "borrowed" from the family nativity set) and wondering why do we go to "number two" when we pray or want something? Why don't we just go to "number one", God? Growing up, the whole concept of the trinity never made since to me, but since I lived in a spiritual Christian family, this wasn't really an issue.

As I got older and entered high school, I quickly noticed that I was a bit different. In my school, like in most schools in America, there were basically four groups with whom you could be associated: the "Alternative", the "preps", the "crack-heads" or the African-Americans (being that 90% of the county I grew up in was white, they ended up being somewhat alienated and kept to themselves). Then there was me. I have to say looking back now, that this was one of the blessings of Allah. I very much feel like Allah was protecting me from all sorts of things which, had gotten involved in them, could have brought me down later on. For example, I was always in search of a "girlfriend", much like any other typical high schooler. However, whenever the situation presented itself for me to take advantage of, I always found myself overwhelmed with shyness and I wasn't able to do anything, not even move my lips. I am extremely grateful for this now, even if I wasn't then.

Although I hung out with the "Alternative" group, I never really felt like I fit in. They liked to talk about music, trash their friends, and do drugs or some other mindless pastime. I, on the other hand, was interested in the Black Panthers, Medgar Evers, and Malcolm X. This made me look a little odd to say the least and I received more than a few tags as being a "Black wannabe". It was at this time, while in the eleventh grade, that I began to read The Autobiography of Malcolm X, the ultimate anti-white leader, or so I was told. I read his book, and the more I read it, the more I couldn't put it down; his story was amazing to me. He came from nothing and then…there he was.

But, it was the chapter entitled "Mecca" that would have the most profound effect on me. In it, he told his story of how he was affected by the generosity and compassion of, not only the Muslims he met while making the Hajj, but also by Islam itself. I read that and thought to myself, "who are these guys?" So, I went to the school library and started to check out every book that I could about Islam. I was amazed at what I read; here they believed in the same principals I has found so innate within myself. They said that there was only One God, that Jesus was not his son, but a rightly guided Messenger and Prophet. I was taken aback. I knew that whatever this "Islam thing" was, I needed to be a part of it.

At that time I considered myself a Muslim. If you had asked me what my religion was, I would have said Islam. I hadn't taken my official shahada mind you, but in my heart I was a Muslim. I was a bit naïve at that point though. I knew that Muslims were supposed to pray, but I didn't know how many times, or how to pray and so on. I didn't know much, and there wasn't anyone for me to learn from at that point. I was just kind of walking around saying "hey, I'm Muslim". It was then that I got the jump-start that I needed. A friend of mine got a bit agitated by me saying I was a Muslim all the time (I was a bit over zealous at this point) and said that I wasn't really Muslim. "You

don't even pray," he told me. I thought to myself, you know what...he's right. I knew I needed to take this being a Muslim thing a step further. That's where I ran into a problem.

Who were these Muslims? I didn't know a Muslim or where to meet any. There wasn't exactly a mosque down the block from my house you have to understand. You could have literally found gold more easily than a Muslim where I lived. So, I searched the phone book and came across a mosque in Washington D.C. But, that was unfortunately about two and a half hours away and might as well have been two thousand miles away. When I first called them I was so nervous. Here I was about to talk to a Muslim! They were very pleased by my enthusiasm towards Islam and my eagerness at becoming a Muslim. But, they wanted me to come to the mosque. This would of course be a problem.

At the time I was still in high school and under the reign of my parents, who also controlled my extended whereabouts, especially since it was the family vehicle that I was driving. My chances of getting that car for a trip to D.C. were slim at best. What was I going to do? I couldn't get to the Muslims, so how was I going to be a Muslim. I asked them if they could come down here, but that was to no avail. I needed to do this now; I couldn't just sit around for another year or two with this. It was after much prodding that I finally convinced the brother to let me take my shahada right then and there, on the phone. I guess that might have been a first...conversion by phone.

So, that is how I came to Islam. I can truly say now, looking back on the whole story, that I was overwhelmingly blessed by the way Allah guided me to Islam. I look back now and see my old friends from high school and how lost they are. Then I look at myself. I mean I know that I have more than a few rough edges and that I have much improving to do, not only as a Muslim, but also as a person in general. But, I can't help but feel a bit awed that I was guided and that Allah picked me to be guided and out of where? Nowhere.

I look back and I think...what was it that guided me? What could have led me to this? This "religion of the Arabs", that was so foreign to me that I would have needed a passport just to get in. Then I realized that what happened to me was from Allah and that He alone has guided me. I feel kind of awestruck when I think of it. I mean, I don't know why, but Allah picked me for this religion of guidance. I feel like I have been saved from the Hell fire and plucked from the ashes. It is this, my being guided to Islam by Allah and Allah alone, that is the greatest blessing that I have ever received.

Testimonial courtesy of www.islam-online.net

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3 P.M.

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Gamel Ibrahim
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Masjid Farooq
905-858-7856

Sixty years ago I knew everything; now I know nothing; education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance.

- Will Durant

25 Duas

1. Our Lord! Grant us good in this world and good in the life to come and keep us safe from the torment of the Fire (2:201)

2. Our Lord! Bestow on us endurance and make our foothold sure and give us help against those who reject faith. (2:250)

3. Our Lord! Take us not to task if we forget or fall into error. (2:286)

4. Our Lord! Lay not upon us such a burden as You did lay upon those before us. (2:286)

5. Our Lord! Impose not on us that which we have not the strength to bear, grant us forgiveness and have mercy on us. You are our protector. Help us against those who deny the truth. (2:286)

6. Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate from the truth after You have guided us, and bestow upon us mercy from Your grace. Verily You are the Giver of bounties without measure. (3:8)

7. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and the lack of moderation in our doings, and make firm our steps and succour us against those who deny the truth.(3:147)

8. Our Lord! Whomsoever You shall commit to the Fire, truly You have brought [him] to disgrace, and never will wrongdoers find any helpers (3:192)

9. Our Lord! Behold we have heard a voice calling us unto faith: "Believe in your Lord" as we have believed. (3:193)

10. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and efface our bad deeds and take our souls in the company of the righteous. (3:193)

11. Our Lord! And grant us that which you have promised to us by Your messengers and save us from shame on the Day of Judgement. Verily You never fail to fulfill Your promise. (3:194)

12. Our Lord! We have sinned against ourselves, and unless You grant us forgiveness and bestow Your mercy upon us, we shall most certainly be lost! (7:23)

13. Our Lord! Place us not among the people who have been guilty of evildoing. (7:47)

14. Our Lord! Lay open the truth between us and our people, for You are the best of all to lay open the truth. (7:89)

15. Our Lord! Pour out on us patience and constancy, and make us die as those who have surrendered themselves unto You. (7:126)

16. Our Lord! Make us not a trial for the evildoing folk, and save as by Your mercy from people who deny the truth (10:85-86)

17. Our Lord! You truly know all that we may hide [in our hearts] as well as all that we bring into the open, for nothing whatever, be it on earth or in heaven, remains hidden from Allah. (14:38)

18. Our Lord! Bestow on us mercy from Your presence and dispose of our affairs for us in the right way. (18:10)

19. Our Lord! Grant that our spouses and our offspring be a comfort to our eyes, and give us the grace to lead those who are conscious of You. (25:74)

20. Our Lord! You embrace all things within Your Grace and Knowledge, forgive those who repent and follow Your path, and ward off from them the punishment of Hell. (40:7)

21. Our Lord! Make them enter the Garden of Eden which You have promised to them, and to the righteous from among their fathers, their wives and their offspring, for verily You are alone the Almighty and the truly Wise. (40:8)

22. Our Lord! Relieve us of the torment, for we do really believe. (44:12)

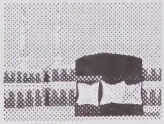
23. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins as well as those of our brethren who proceeded us in faith and let not our hearts entertain any unworthy thoughts or feelings against [any of] those who have believed. Our Lord! You are indeed full of kindness and Most Merciful (59:10)

24. Our Lord! In You we have placed our trust, and to You do we turn in repentance, for unto You is the end of all journeys. (60:4)

25. Our Lord! Perfect our light for us and forgive us our sins, for verily You have power over all things. (66:8)

Allaahumma anfi'nee bima a'llamtanee, wa a'llimnee ma yanfa'unee, wa zidnee ilmaa.
O Allah, benefit me from what you have taught me and teach me that which will benefit me and increase me in my knowledge.

The history of KA'BAH



As Hajj was taking place this year, we all saw pictures of millions of people performing *Tawaf,* with thousands at a time attempting to touch the black stone. We understand the significance and importance given to both by Muslims, yet do we know their history or even their religious significance?

The Black Stone dates back to before the creation of humankind. The stone, having been sundered, is composed of several pieces and fragments, bound together by a silver ligature. It is semicircular and measures about 10 inches horizontally and 12 inches vertically.

According to Islamic tradition, the stone came to Earth long ago from heaven. Allah (*SWT*) gave Adam (*'alayhi assalaam)* a bright and pure white stone to bring to Earth from Paradise to set in the Ka'bah, the shrine he would build. It is the centuries-old tradition of Muslims to touch and kiss the stone because this was the prophet Muhammad's (*PBUH*) practice. Muslims claim the Prophet taught that if one kissed the stone with conviction from the heart and walks around the Ka'bah praying to Allah (*SWT*), the stone will bear witness to one's supplication on the Day of Judgment, when the stone will be given vision and the power to talk.

The Ka'bah is the building towards which Muslims face 5 times a day, every day in prayer. This has been the case for over 1,400 years and will remain so till the end of time. Yet, do we know who built it or how often it has been rebuilt during the regions tumultuous history.

Did you know that it was reconstructed as recently as 4 years ago and has been (according to scholars) reconstructed between 5 to 12 times? The Ka'bah has the singular honor of having been constructed and reconstructed by the Prophets Adam, Ibrahim, Ismail and Muhammad (peace be upon them all). The very first construction of the Ka'bah was carried out by Prophet Adam (*'alayhi assalaam*) and according to the Quran, it was the first house that was built for humanity to worship Allah (*SWT).* The earliest dimensions of the Ka'bah that is known is the Ka'bah as reconstructed by Prophet Ibrahim (*'alayhi assalaam*) and was not an exact cube (48ft6' X 33ft X 30ft X 46ft5').

Many reconstruction's had taken place between then and Prophet Muhammad's (*PBUH)* time, In fact Prophet Mohammad (*PBUH*) participated in one of the reconstruction's before the holy book was revealed to him. The story goes as follows:

After a flash flood, the Ka'bah was damaged and its walls cracked. It needed rebuilding. The responsibility was divided among the Quraish's 4 tribes. Once the walls were erected it was time to place the Black Stone on the eastern wall of the Ka'bah.

Arguments erupted about who would have the honor of placing the Black Stone. Tempers rose, until Abu Umayyah, Makkah's oldest man, proposed that the first man to enter the gate of the mosque the following morning would be the one to decide the matter. That person was the Prophet (*PBUH).* The Prophet's (*PBUH)* solution, which was unanimously agreed upon, was to place the Black Stone on a cloak, have the elders of each of the clans hold one edge of the cloak and carry the stone to its place on the mosque wall. The Prophet (*PBUH)* then picked up the stone and placed it on the wall of the Ka'bah.

The Ka'bah by this time had changed its shape since the time of Prophet Ibrahim (*'alayhi assalaam)*, with it not covering the whole of the Ibrahimic foundation. There is a Hadith that states that it was always the Prophet Muhammad's (*PBUH*) wish to rebuild the Ka'bah to incorporate the whole foundation. This was briefly done in 64 Hijri but was again changed to the shape it had at the time of the Prophet (*PBUH)* (the dimensions remain the same to this date) 10 years later by a local ruler.

The Ka'bah was rebuilt in 1039 Hijri and most recently in 1996. After the 1996 reconstruction the only original thing left in the Ka'bah are the stones.

As to the question what is inside the Ka'bah, Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi, president of the Islamic Society of North America, had the opportunity to go inside the Ka'bah in October 1998 and he describes the inside of the Ka'bah as follows:

- 2 pillars (others have reported 3)
- a table to place items such as perfume
- 2 lantern-type lambs hanging from the ceiling
- room to accommodate about 50 people
- no electric lights inside
- walls and floors consisting of marble
- 1 door and no windows
- the upper inside walls of the Ka'bah are covered with some kind of curtain with the *Kalima* written on it.

Syma Saleem, University of Toronto (St. George)

"Prominent Muslim Women"

Habiba al-Adawiyya

Habiba (may Allah (SWT) be pleased with her) was said to be one of those who *know* Allah. She lived in Basra in the first part of the third (H)/ ninth (CE) century. It is most likely that she belonged to the generation after Rabia al-Adawiyya.

It is related that when Habiba performed her nightly prayer, she would stand on the roof of her house. She would enfold herself tightly in her wrap, cover herself with her veil, and say: "My God! The stars have set, everyone's eyes are closed, the rulers have locked the gates of the city, and every lover is alone with his beloved; this is when I devote myself to You."

And just before dawn she would say: "The night has slipped away and the day is drawing near. If only You had accepted my worship, I would be at peace, or if You had reciprocated it, I would be consoled. Upon Your glory! Thus shall persist my devotion unto You as long as you allow me to remain alive. Even if you were to drive me away from Your door, I would not leave, because my heart has become aware of Your kindness and generosity!"

My comments :)

The words of Habiba (may Allah (SWT) bless her) highlight an important aspect of the cosmology of our tradition. Allah regularly reminds us that He created everything in complementary pairs: the night and the day, male and female, good and evil etc. At our age, it is crucial that we remember that everything "bad" that is happening to the ummah around the world is to test us. Remember that the word for tribulation or calamity—"fitna" is related to a word that means "to test gold for impurity". In the beginning of Suratul Mulk, Allah (SWT) tells us that He created death and life (cosmological opposites) to test us, to see which ones from amongst us would be the best in doing good. When we work with the MSAs, go to halaqas —whatever, we should always keep in mind that our work is not going to be futile if we are doing it for Allah. If we're not getting results, we need to check our intentions and re-examine our motives for engaging in a particular activity. Is this for Allah (SWT)? Or is it for my resume? My father to be proud of me? My mother to brag about me to her friends? Is it so that my friends can "hang-out" together? Perhaps it is so some sister or brother I want to possibly marry can see how "devoted" I am to Allah (SWT)...Doing everything for Allah (SWT) alone requires love for Allah (SWT) and the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him).

Trying to *LIVE* Islam in the West without *LOVE* for Allah (SWT) and for the Messenger of Allah (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is insanity! We need to remember that while "kings" like Jean Cretien, George Bush Jr., the UN, the FBI, the "Supreme" Court and others may "lock the gates", Allah (SWT) is always with us and ready to accept us and respond to our pleas for help. No matter what seemingly insurmountable obstacles litter our path in drawing closer to Allah (SWT), we must persist and persevere. For anyone who has taken even one breath of air *conscious* of what that means, has tasted the kindness and generosity of Allah (SWT).

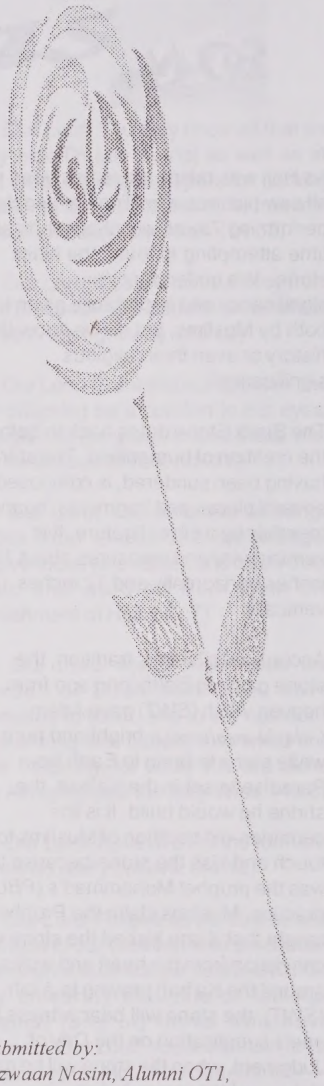
May Allah (SWT) make us people who learn and work for His sake alone, who struggle and persevere towards ends that will benefit us after we die—people of ihsan.

May Allah (SWT) forgive us our wrong actions and accept our good actions—admitting us through His mercy and generosity into Jannatul Firdous.

May Allah (SWT) make us love and fulfill the rights of the Best of Creation, Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, may the best of blessings and peace be upon him and upon his house as long as nights and days remain!

And praised be Allah (SWT), Lord of the Worlds!

Submitted By: Riyad,
U of T, Scarborough, Year 2
Written by: Abu Turab
U of T, St. George, Year2



Submitted by:
Rizwaan Nasim, Alumni OT1,
Chemical Engineering,
University of Toronto (St. George)

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

(From p.27)

Across	Down
3. Ramadan	1. Hannah
6. Muharram	2. Maghrib
7. Hira	4. Al-Fatihah
8. Jibril	5. Tahajjud
9. Silk	6. Makkah
11. Khadijah	9. Shahadah
12. Israel	
13. Islam	

"And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allah, and be not divided amongyourselves; and remember with gratitude God's favour on you; so that by His Grace, ye became brethren... Thus doth God make His Signs clear to you: That ye may be guided." [Quran 3:103]

Allah's mercy descends upon those who help one another with mercy and kindness for the believer is the brother of every other believer." [Muslim]

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5. TANDOORI TIKKA WITH NAN
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2. TANDOORI TIKKA
3. TANDOORI SEEK KEBOB
4. TANDOORI BOTI KEBOB

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3. NIHARI
4. HALEEM
1. MIX VEGETABLE
2. ALOO PALAK
3. SAG SARSOON

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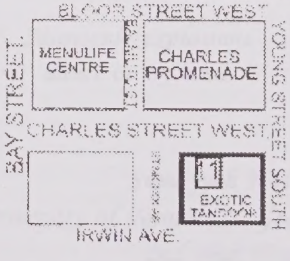


Exotic Tandoori is a branch of Pakwanchi Restaurant

Poetry Corner

For the People of Palestine!

Why do they not feel?
Prowling on a land of peace, ready to steal
Fighting back for what they believe
Praying such a horror will leave
Together they stand, each other's protection
Every man throwing a stone, empty determination
Bullets against stones
Death causing decay to their bones
In honor they die
But all I can do is cry
My Muslim brothers and sisters are being killed
With bullets their bodies are being filled
The rich live without a worry
While the poor die without anyone there, for them to bury
An ongoing nightmare for children
Vain efforts made by the women
They live in a war!
Where gunfire and blood soar
Nowhere for them to hide
In their own homes many have died
My only comfort is that the Almighty is there
Aware of how the Muslims are in despair
May Allah ﷻ make ease their pain
And in the hereafter let them gain

Shireen Patel.

State of the Earth

Scattered wind and scathing sun
What can give comfort is now a menace
Hell on earth is no longer just an adage
Fury and anguish devour life and hope
Existence remains a skeletal residue

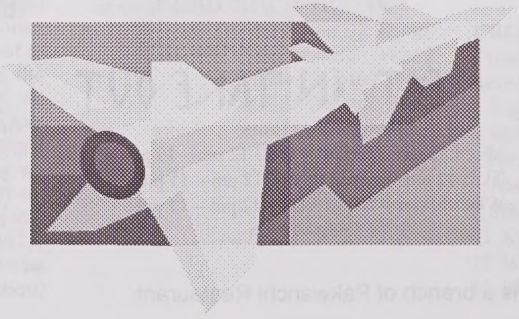
Fear and anger reign the earth
Hatred devours, leaving nothing but dust
Open wounds that barely heal
Human survival is no longer complete

She will be shot before her embryo becomes a fetus
She must be a mother to her siblings at age 12
Her family can eat at the cost of her dignity
Medical care is a luxury when healing is impossible without medicine

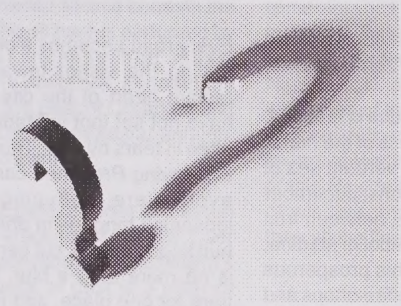
Doctors watch as life is relinquished
Technology destroys cities and states
Splitting of the atom results in destruction
Smart bombs revel in accuracy of death
The choice of a child changes from a pen to a grenade
Mother earth sheds tears of blood

Dehumanize the pregnant mother to facilitate the kill
Stop the oppression of victims in their own homes!
Angels comfort those who need you now
God, please make all of this right somehow.

S. Javeed
Alumna 9T3



Poetry Corner



I don't know but I thought I'd just write...
Is this true, is this all right...

Are we all equal or do we have no place...
Or is it just me and the rest of my race...

Are we being blamed for what others did...
Or is it just me acting like a kid?

Why are we always looked down at...
Why do I feel that we're all just doomed?
Why everywhere do we see this and that
Is it that bad, are we just so screwed?

Why aren't we one, why is everyone busy
Why is our picture gone, man it looks so fuzzy

Why are we just talking while resting back in our seats...
This is not how we'll win, that's not how someone beats...

People, for the sake of Allah, just do it for your kids,
Just join your hands together, like the people who won before did...

Feel the spirit in you; know that you are the same...
Before it is too late, when there will be nobody to blame...

Do something for your people, don't just sit back and stare...
Feel the strength in your heart and act like someone who cares...

Remember the Hereafter, remember when you'll be asked...
When nothing is going to hide and nothing will be masked...

I told you that day is coming and I'm sure you already know...
Don't just forget then, regret; don't throw dirt on the clean snow...

We are blamed because we're weak, and we can't talk back...
It's not experience or courage, people it's unity we lack...

I leave you with those words and I hope it rings a bell...
May Allah brings us together... and always keeps us well...

May Allah keeps us strong... and to others we shall never bend...
And always remember that no matter how a road is, it always comes to an end...

Karim Ragheb,
University of Toronto (St. George),
Year 2, Human Biology

Ski Trip

Possessed with dread
and excitement
I push forward

Heightening acceleration
Diminishing certainty

I struggle
battling the snow
the wind
gravity

My strength insufficient
too late
to regain stability

I see white.

Several moments
of confused tumbling
leave me dazed

I reach for my pocket
only to find the cold white

Snowflaked glasses
a shield from clarity

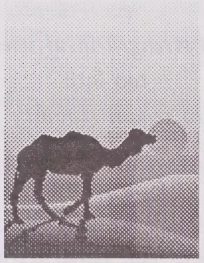
I stagger to my feet
to deter further collision

Miniscule explosions
dance in my head.

Sumayyah Hussein
University of Toronto(St. George)
2nd Year, English

Ramadan in Madina

The approach to Makka lies through mountains, sharp, unforgiving angles of granite. The road to Madina passes through great plains of basalt: the harra wastelands which provide dramatic reminders of the region's volcanic past.Several eruptions are recorded by the Muslim historians, the most fearsome taking place in 1257, when a volcano poured out fast-moving orange streams of lava, which were only deflected to pass to the east of the city by the fervent prayers of its inhabitants.



Desiccated by the merciless desert air, these seas of fire have dried to form black basalt plains, which stretch beyond the horizon. They are God's defence of the city, whose glassy sharpness kept at bay the idolatrous invaders of *Quraish*, forcing them to confront the believers at their only point of access, at the Battle of the Trench. The desolation of this landscape of flat blackness, interrupted by dry sarha bushes, and, far away, the shapely profile of extinct volcanoes, gives the impact of arrival an extraordinary dramatic power. The proximity of the city, on the motorway inevitably dubbed the Hijra Highway, is first announced by the slip-road to Abyar Ali, the Wells of Ali (*radi'Allahu'anhu*). These are sweetwater sources much frequented by pilgrims, eager to benefit from the medicinal properties of these deep, cold wells once owned by the Blessed Prophet's son-in-law. Pilgrims from the Subcontinent, in particular, flock here to catch the precious fluid in bottles, to be given to relatives on their return: a gift almost as welcome as the Water of *Zamzam* itself.

Ten minutes drive, and Quba is reached. Here, the black barrenness of the harrat suddenly gives way to a verdant sea of green. Alfalfa, watermelons, cucumber and tomatoes grow here, between fruit trees and the ancient symbol of Madina, the date palm itself. In this prosperous suburb, now a place of coffee-shops and small parks, can still be found the Zarqa wells from which the Blessed Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) drank when he first reached the City, and which are the secret of the land's fertility. Here, too, the Madinan Muslims, and the penniless but radiant refugees from Makkan tyranny, patiently lined the walls and the high places, hoping for a glimpse of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*)'s Messenger and the faithful Abu Bakr (radi'Allahu 'anhu), as they appeared as dots on the shimmering horizon.

The mosque at Quba, the first place of worship founded in Islam, is impressive but sober. The 1986 reconstruction retains the familiar features of Madinese architecture, which are ribbed white domes, and basalt facing over a modest exterior that recalls Madina's primordial simplicity. The courtyard, screened overhead by day from the scorching heat, is flagged with black, red and white marble. Calligraphy by great Turkish masters soars overhead, proclaiming the uniqueness of this place. Arabesque latticework filters the light of the palm groves outside. Doves coo in the window-niches.

Despite the sense of peace, few linger here. The pull of the Haram, the Sanctuary, is everywhere, and as the sun lowers in the west the pilgrims have thoughts only for the Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*)'s Mosque. At this time, there is only one destination for visitors and city-dwellers alike. In Ramadan, in this city, it would be possible to switch off the traffic lights in the late afternoon. Every road becomes a one-way street, pulling the visitor towards the cool, radiant heart of the city. Visitors who have not set foot in Madina before are often in tears by now. The blessings of a still, loving Presence can be breathed everywhere, softening hearts, and loosening tongues in *dhikr*. Shops and buildings pass by, but here the city itself is no more than a blur. Visitors come here for one place, and for one person alone. The road skirts the Manakha district, and passes the Mosque of Abu Bakr (*radi'Allahu 'anhu*), its Ottoman minaret pointing to the clear, reddening sky. Then, the splendour of the Haram is suddenly revealed. A minaret and then several more, sparkle in welcome. And then the *adhan* rises, piercing the warm air with its magnetic summons. A sea of quiet humanity pours into each of its seventy gates. Many have removed their sandals long beforehand, out of respect for the ground, which holds the Messenger (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) in its embrace. Within, there is clear light, carpets, water-barrels, and an extraordinary dynamic which draws the visitor on, and in, until at last the courtyard is reached, and the pilgrim stands in the presence of the Best of Creation.

Hundreds of thousands are being fed. These guests of the Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) sit, while those honoured with this service circulate, smilingly handing out dates, or small containers of yoghurt. In this palace of the Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*), no one, however poor, goes hungry when the time of the fast has ended. Children tumble on the carpets, laughing with delight at the experience of the endless sanctuary. There is a murmur of grateful conversation, and of prayer. The space is articulated with supreme genius. To one side is the Gate of Gabriel, leading on, and in, to the *Rawda*, and to the *mihrab* in which the Messenger himself laid his forehead on the earth in adoration

of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*). On one side is the *dakka*, the carved marble platform on which the muezzin and his assistants await the appointed time. On the other rises the gold grille beyond which lies the cool and shaded silence beneath the great dome. The air here is perfumed by the rarest of incense and musk, announcing the presence, beneath the flagstones, of the Best of Creation, and Abu Bakr and Umar (*rahi'Allahu 'anhum*), his closest companions.

The modern Egyptian poet al-Fayturi expresses the emotions of millions: Over the Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*)'s form every speck of dust is a pillar of light ascending from the dome of his tomb to the dome of the skies. And the awe that makes our foreheads bow draws its own horizon, and higher horizons, from hands and from lips - the road of 'In the name of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*).' The proximity is overwhelming for some pilgrims, whose humility and awe forces them to sit at a respectful distance, perhaps some way down the mosque. Others cannot sit too close. Everywhere there is worship, bowing and prostration, the mellifluous murmuring of the Qur'an, and wordless contemplation.

A hadith tells us that 'Prayer in my mosque is a thousand times better than prayer in any other mosque, saving only the Sacred Mosque itself.' As the *iqama* sounds, and half a million men and women rise with longing for the prayer, the calculation does not feel like an overstatement. Prayer in the *Rawda* is especially sought after. A hadith affirms that 'the space between my grave and my pulpit is one of the Meadows of Paradise.' Here, listening to the awesome gravity of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*)'s word, the continuity with the blessed past is felt intensely. The greatest saints and scholars of Islam have stood here: after the Companions came countless thousands: the Four Imams worshipped here, as did al-Shaybani, Ibn Jurayj, al-Zuhri, Sibawayh, Ibn Qutaybah, al-Ghazali, al-Nawawi, A'isha al-Ba'uniyya, Ibn Khaldun (*rahimahullah*): all the great souls of Islam have prayed here, humbled by the Prophetic presence.

After the silent prayers of the day, the worshippers drink the words of the Qur'an thirstily. The greetings of peace are given, and the lines break up as they worship individually. Circles of remembrance form in the *Rawda*, as turbaned Turks repeat a litany, guided by their teacher, prayer beads in hand. Nigerians, Uzbeks, Bangladeshis and a whole sea of Indonesians do likewise. A Baluchi folk-melody, 'May I see the towers of Madina', sings, on the tongues of this *Rawda*'s nightingales are words of wisdom, more beautifully coloured than all the flowers of Madina!

Among the many Prophetic litanies that the careful ear may hear in this place, the most widely used is the *Dala'il al-Khayrat*, the Indications of Blessings, by Imam al-Jazuli, whose tomb in far-off Marrakesh breathes something of the spirit of Madina. This great prayer begins with over two hundred Names of the Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*), culled from the scriptures, and which may also be read in exquisite Naskh calligraphy above the green tiles on the *qibla* wall. Hundreds of names recall him: the Messenger of Mercy, the Emissary of Virtue, Reliant, the Beloved of God, Seal of the Prophets...these pilgrims know that they are in the presence of the most influential man in history. He had found a people divided by the crudest pagan ignorance, and left them united in the purest and most exalted monotheism. Formerly they had denied life after death; twenty-three short years on, they lived with it constantly before their eyes. He had found them unable to rule themselves, torn by age-long vendettas, knowing no law other than the selfish interest of the tribe and the individual's honour; and he left their hearts so united that they withstood the shock of his death, and went out to liberate the world. In this place, the Messenger guided his disciples. Here they learnt how to be still before their Lord, how to restrain their anger, to live for others, to show compassion to young and old. This was the crucible of a New World Order: the most effective school ever known. And presiding over it all, still, is the presence of the Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*). His mission for the Muslim commonwealth awaits its final consummation, when, at the Resurrection, he shall appear with his name of Intercessor. There is no Muslim alive who does not hope for the honour of resurrection under his green Banner of Praise, and for the rapture of salvation through his pleading before his Lord. *Adab*, good manners in his presence, is hence passionately cultivated and prayed for. Those who respectfully move forwards, to stand before the gold of the *Wajiha* to greet him, are moved not only by love and gratitude for what he did, but by fervent hope for his prayers, help and pleading amid the terrors of the Apocalypse. He said: 'No Muslim greets me but that Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) restores my spirit to me so that I am able to respond to him.' Five times a day, worshippers end their prayers by invoking blessings and peace upon his spirit. No human being, since the beginning of time, has been more blessed. And this reciprocal rite of *taslim* is the culmination of a lifetime of calling down God's blessings upon him, a cosmic process in which God and the Angels themselves join. In the presence of his spirit, *salat* and *salam* come continuously. The entire mosque is filled with prayers for him; and this is the largest building in the world. Here, the existence of humanity finds its justification. 'Not one of you believes,' says a hadith, 'until I am dearer to him than his father, his son, and all mankind.' The power of this love detains many in the mosque.

But the body has its rights, and others slowly leave, to find a place to eat in this crowded city. Restaurants of all kinds abound, and the air around the mosque loses its hint of musk and sandalwood, to become fragrant with the aroma of Turkish kebabs, Lebanese meze, Malaysian satay, Sudanese chicken and beans. In the darkness, street vendors offer the garments of fifty countries: Indonesian batik, Damascus muslin,

Egyptian cotton, Moroccan chiffre. Prayer beads of olive pits, amber or ebony dangle from shelves. Women browse through jewellery, heaped high with no fear of thieves. The cheerful fellowship of the eating-houses is not the profane self-exaltation of the smart Western restaurant. Here, companionship is the main item on the menu. Struggling for words, Muslims of two hundred nationalities speak about their homes, about the troubles of the world, about their hopes for an end to the unbearable shallowness of the modern world, and a return to Allah. The air outside is now much cooler. Those who know the city may briefly visit some of its nearer shrines, such as the Mosque of the Two *Qiblas*, with its resonance of the lost Muslim city of Jerusalem, the Third Holy City. Unlike Madina, Jerusalem has been tragically desacralised in recent decades, with the introduction of nightclubs, pornography, and every form of degradation. But Islam's grasp on Madina is still strong. Such is God's power in defence of His Messenger that no enemy army has succeeded in capturing it, since the dawn of Islam.

The *adhan* sounds for *isha*, and the veins of the city pump back towards the mosque which is its heart. Grateful for God's gift of food and drink, the pilgrims are eager for the prayer, followed by the *Tarawih* rite extending almost two hours into the night. *Tarawih* in Madina is one of the great spectacles of the world. Perhaps a million men, women and children, stand in neat lines in the mosque, on its roof, and in the marbled spaces nearby. *Tarawih* in Mecca is an experience of austere majesty; in Madina, it is characterized by delight and by love. To pray in the company of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*)'s Messenger (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*), who rose through the seven heavens to bring to us the gift of prayer, and who will intercede for tides of humanity, is an almost inexpressible joy. Villagers from Pakistan, shopkeepers from Turkey, Nigerian businessmen, and Bosnian farmers, all stand together, their differences annihilated by the presence of the man whose mission was truly universal.

In the Qur'an, there is nothing of Arab pride. Its original context in history was the Arab people, but it pays little attention to them. It is farsighted, affirming that each previous prophet had been sent only to his own people; but that now, a Prophet had come who was for all mankind. And here is the proof of that mission's truth and of its success under Allah (*subhaha wa ta'ala*): a million human beings, outwardly diverse but of a single heart, basking in the glow of Madina.

After *Tarawih*, it is tea-time. Midnight, under the arc-lamps of this warm city, is no time for sleep. *Sufi* fraternities meet in homes, and recall the glories of the Beloved of Madina. Hadith are read, in the sing-song style traditional in the city. Commentaries are given in the delightful Madina dialect, so rich in Syrian and Turkish words. *Tahajjud* prayers attract perhaps a quarter of a million, deep in the small hours. Others are sleeping in the streets, or in the hotels, which range from small Egyptian resthouses with doubtful stairs, to the five-star plushness of the Sheraton and the Green Palace. On the roofs of many hotels are small gardens, and here, even at this hour, the *Sufi* orders are again enjoying their fellowship in the spirit. The *sunna* recommends that at least some of the night be spent in sleep. Two hours before dawn, most of the city is silent.

And then, the first *adhan*, more than an hour before the ***adha*** for the prayer, rises into the black sky. The hotels serve a pre-dawn meal, but few linger until the last moment. An hour before the dawn prayer begins, the mosque is already full; the worshippers knowing by experience the value of this time. The *Suffa*, the small veranda attached to the Prophetic tomb, is crowded with turbaned men, prayer-beads in hand. Here lived the poorest of the Companions, those who were under the most intense spiritual guidance, who hungered, and lived in rags, and prayed. The final *adhan* sounds, and then the *iqama*. The prayer is said, followed by the atmosphere of peace and consummation which ends each prayer.

Many remain until *ishraq*, the individual prayer said after sunrise. Others hail taxis, and visit the outlying shrines. The most important of these is Mount Uhud. The Blessed Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) proclaimed it as 'a mountain which loves us, and which we love'. Its mysterious quality has been reinforced by aerial photographs, which show that the mountain spells the Arabic name of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*). To walk in its dry valleys is to encounter solitary pilgrims, meditating on the evanescence of life. Occasionally a *qalandar* is seen, with untidy hair, fingers heavy with brass rings, his eyes disquietingly bright. Some live in this hill throughout their visit, descending to the valley to pray. Ramadan is a time of renunciation. Although the morning air is still cool, the sense of detachment granted by the fast has sobered the crowds, and focussed their minds. The pilgrims clustered around the iron grille that allows them to view the graves of the Martyrs of Uhud read from prayer books, or repeat the words of the *muzawwir*, the official guide. 'Peace be upon you, Hamza (*radi'Allahu 'anhu*), the Lion of God, the uncle of God's Messenger! Peace be upon you, Mus'ab (*rahi'Allahu 'anhu*), hero of the Companions!' Beside the cemetery, the authorities have constructed a mosque for those who wish to pray in this place.

The great cemetery of Madina, however, is *al-Baqi'*. This lies near the Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*)'s tomb, from which it was until recently separated by one of the gates of the walled city, the *Bab al-Baqi'*. The cemetery has many names, including *Jannat al-Baqi'* (The Garden of Baqi'), and *Baqi' al-Gharqad*, a reference to the brambles (*gharqad*) which covered it when Islam first arrived. In the fifth year of the Hijra, the Companion Uthman ibn Maz'un (*radi'Allahu 'anhu*) died, and was buried here, and on the Blessed Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*)'s instructions the area was cleared of brambles and became the last resting

Lights from a Distance

This is a piece that affected my entire life.

It's part of a letter that Sayed Kobt, the famous martyred Muslim thinker and writer, sent to his sister Amina and was later published under the name of "Lights from a Distance".

"When we live for ourselves only, life appears to be very short and minute starting from when we started to comprehend and ends with the end of our limited life-span.

But when we live for others, i.e. when we live for an idea (a concept or an ideology), life seems to be very long and deep starting from where humanity has started and extends even after our departure from the face of this Earth.

We win multiples of our age in this case, really win it and not imagining, imagine life this way, our awareness or feeling of our days, our hours, our moments are then multiplied. Life is not measured by counting the years, but by the amount of feelings. And what the "practical people" call in this case an "illusion" is in fact reality that is truer than any of their realities. This is because life is nothing but peoples' feelings of life. Remove from anyone his feeling of life; you actually remove life itself in its true or real meaning. And whenever a person has a multiplied feeling about his life, he indeed has lived a multiplied life.

It seems for me that the matter discussed is very obvious that it needs no argumentation.

We live for ourselves a longer life whenever we live for others and this is equivalent to the amount that we feel for others, we magnify then our feeling of our own lives and thus multiply life itself in the end."

Khaled Al-Qazzaz

Continued from previous page..

place of the Companions. Today, Baqi' is the most visited graveyard in the world. Until recently rough cement walls surrounded it, but in 1996 the authorities replaced these with fine granite, pierced with large iron and brass grilles, to commemorate and honour this place. Some pilgrims stand by the grilles, but others, particularly in the cool hour after dawn, venture in by the splendid new gates. To facilitate circulation, the authorities have established cement pathways throughout the cemetery. Guidebooks provide detailed maps of the plots, naming hundreds of the individuals who are buried here. Hence the pilgrims, guided by their *muzawwirs*, stand, or crouch, before the tombs of the Mothers of the Believers: A'isha, Hafsa, Umm Habiba (*radi'Allahu 'anham*) and the others. Nearby is the Blessed Prophet's infant son, the two year old Ibrahim, whose death caused the Prophet such pain. The pilgrims move on to salute Uthman (*radi' Allahu 'anhu*), the third Caliph, and then Imam Malik and his teacher Nafi'. Al-Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, is here. So too is Halima al-Sa'diyya, the nurse whose dry breasts miraculously flowed with milk when the infant Muhammad (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) was set to them. To one side is the grave of Imam Shamyl (*rahimahullah*), the nineteenth-century hero of the Caucasus, visited by Chechen and Daghistani pilgrims to this day. Al-Baqi' is a powerful place. Other cities consider it their pride to host a single saint; but here there are hundreds. All around lie at rest the men and women who heard the Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*)'s summons, and broke the idols of their forefathers, and gave their lives to his cause. To this blessed ambience is added the *baraka* of Ramadan, and as the days pass, this too gains in power.

The fasting city of Madina has other wonders, although not all are as spectacular as the *Haram* and *al-Baqi'*. There is one mosque no bigger than a prayer mat, surrounded by two layers of bricks, which marks the spot where the Blessed Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) once prayed. An elderly man lives nearby, and sweeps the tiny mosque daily, dispensing prayers and teaching-stories to the visitors.

The tribes of Aws and Khazraj, who welcomed the Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) and his teaching, still live in Madina, retaining their traditions of courtesy and hospitality. The basalt homes in which they once lived, the traditional Madinese *bayt al-bi'r*, built around a courtyard which was often covered with a net and filled with tropical birds, are now mostly gone. Yet otherwise, not much has changed in fourteen hundred years. Pernicious and cheapening influences from the world outside are successfully excluded. Madina shows the truth of the hadith that 'Madina expels impurities as a furnace expels impurities from iron.' The form of the city has changed, but the heart is immutable. In Ramadan, more than at any other time, the continued strength of Islam is manifest here. The city is well-defended, as a hadith recorded by Imam Muslim states, 'the Antichrist cannot enter it, but will be driven away on the lava-plains by *al-Khidr* himself.' In this city, and in this month, the Muslims are at home.

Kerim Fenari, taken from "Q-News"

Why Study Islam?

Islam is a major fact of world history. In fact, although, it's not sufficiently acknowledged, between the 8th and 16th Century Islam was the dominant civilization on the planet. Dominant in the sense of its demography, economic prowess, its cultural productivity and also its universal character. China and India also developed great civilizations at that time but they were limited within a particular geographical area whereas Islam was a great sprawling civilization. Christendom for that period, was confined essentially to the small European appendage to the old world. Islam's political orbit embraced a truly gigantic suave of the planet, including parts of Africa, the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, India itself, Central Asia and Indonesia.

Islam was the great success story of the Middle ages. When Christians interacted with Muslims politically, they invariably found themselves up against more powerful, often embarrassingly more civilized Muslim neighbors. Traveling south from Christian Europe, you would come to Muslim Spain, whose population in the 11th Century was greater than all of Christian Europe put together. The biggest city in Europe was Cordoba under the Muslims which had over a Million inhabitants, at a time when the largest Christian city in Europe, Paris, had barely 60 thousand. To the South-East of Europe, there was of course, the Middle East itself and in due season the very alarming Ottoman presence in the Balkans. It's easy to forget that only 300 years ago the city of Budapest was a flourishing Muslim city. To the east, where now one generally encounters parts of Russia, there were again powerful flourishing Muslim states, those referred to by the European historians as the Tartars and the Golden Horde. And again, these were far more flourishing in civilization then their Christian neighbors, Moscow was a fairly small city, Khazan the great Muslim city was a great center of culture and civilization.

Christendom was more or less encircled and the only way it could go was West which is one of the reasons why it did just that. So that's one reason why Islam is worth studying. It's of more historical importance to Europeans and to Christians than is any other civilization.

Secondly, Islam is of intellectual interest. It's particularly interesting because like Christianity, it sprang from the same Semitic soil and it also allowed its dogmas to be shaped by the same categories of Greek philosophy. In fact, for these two reasons, Islam is more closely related to Christianity than is any other religion.

In studying how universal issues and problems raised by the premises of Semitic monotheism such as questions of metaphysics, styles of worship, problems about the existence of evil in the world and mysticism, Christians have historically found that they can acquire valuable insights and perspectives on their own traditions by looking at how these problems were addressed by Muslim thinkers.

This is a very long time honored process of intellectual dialogue that we find for instance at its peak in the European Middle ages, with people like St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Thomas Aquinas was unquestionably the most brilliant Medieval European mind. In his great work the Summa Theologica, he refers to two individuals more than anybody else. He talks about "the Philosopher" - by whom he means Aristotle- and talks about "the commentator" -by whom he means Averroes [who was Ibn Rushd the great Jurist and Philosopher of Muslim Cordova]. There are many aspects of Averroes' Philosophy which found their place in the mainstream of Medieval Christian thought. So in both political and intellectual history, Islam inhabits the world of Western Christianity, there has been a genuine overlap.

Thirdly, Islam is a major fact of today's world, mainly in demographic terms. At least 62 states now have Muslim majorities, and these include some of the world's most populous countries. The world's 4th most populous country Indonesia is a Muslim country with over 200 million Muslims. Other very populous Muslim countries include Bangladesh, Pakistan and Egypt. China is home to perhaps 40 million Muslims. India contains well over 100 hundred million Muslims. There are now thriving Muslim communities in countries like Japan and Korea, which a hundred years ago quite possibly didn't contain a single Muslim.

In Europe, Islam is the second religion of almost every country, the only exceptions being those countries where it is the majority religion in places like Albania, Azerbaijan for instance. There are perhaps 5 million Muslims in France. According to one researcher, 10.3% of the population of Moscow is now Muslim. At the other end of the continent in England, towns such as Rochdale contain a majority Muslim population.

In the West, the Muslim presence is growing very rapidly largely through natural increase but also through immigration and conversion. Perhaps 15 million Americans are Muslims, including perhaps 4-5 million African Americans, a testament to the vitality and growth of what is now a major American religion. It is estimated that around 1.2 billion people today follow the religion of Islam, hence it's Christianity's nearest numerical rival. [Note: These statistics are taken from the late 90's]

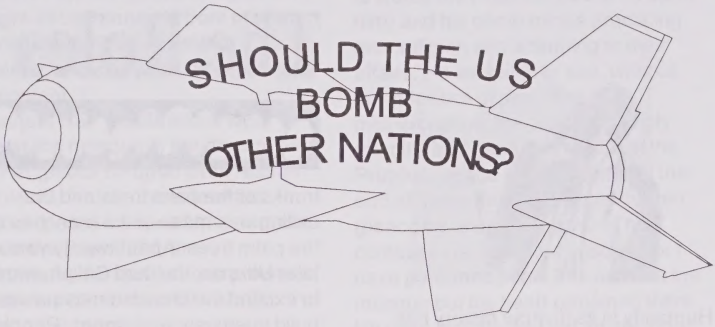
As astonishing as this might seem, demographic growth and the associated political and cultural backlash is not the most remarkable aspect of modern Islamic history. Everybody knows that this religion is at present experiencing a vast transformation, a revival according to some people. This huge force is now shaking every single Muslim country without exception, challenging the pro-Western secular order in countries like Algeria, Egypt and Turkey and also

having repercussions of quite a significant kind for Muslim communities living in the West.

This present day Muslim resurgence has to be seen as one of the great facts of late 20 Century history. With the death of Communism, Islam can be seen as the last great significant transnational ideology which competes with Western Capitalism. That's not to negate the importance of Christianity. It's simply to point out that Christianity's economic impact in Christian countries is far less significant than is Islam's equivalent impact in Muslim lands. A re-Christianization of a Christian country does not have as far reaching implications as the re-Islamization of a Muslim country for the obvious reason that Islam includes things like Law which generally are excluded from the traditional concerns of Christian belief.

The Muslim modality of the late 20th century transformation seems to many observers to be more powerful, more successfully transnational and also more deeply transformative of the cultures in which it appears. It's clear that the future good order of the world and certainly the shape of history in the next century is going to be determined in large measure by the way in which Muslims themselves develop and exploit good purposes, and how non-Muslims interact with this development. Thus, Islam is a major determining fact of contemporary realities and deserves due to attention in almost every academic discipline, especially in History, Philosophy, Anthropology, Politics and Economics.

[transcribed and edited from parts of a lecture series on "Understanding Islam" by Abdal Hakim Winter]



The war against terrorism in Afghanistan seems to be going through its final stage. The eyes that are looking for the big guys of Al-Qaeda and the Taleban are still wide open, trying to locate, pinpoint, capture and punish them for masterminding the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

The question that many people around the world are asking is: who is next? Who would be the next target on the list of the war against terrorism? Would Iran come first or would Iraq be punished before everyone else?

What about Somalia, North Korea, Yemen, Philippines, and other countries that are accused of harboring terrorists? The most important question people should be seriously asking, however, is: should the US continue bombing other countries? And would such a war be justified? Or should it try to get the bad guys via other means instead?

The only one who would likely be satisfied and laughing with joy if the United States bombs other nations is the CNN network. Upon hearing that an attack on Somalia was imminent, CNN immediately rushed to the country to get the first shot and eventually win the ratings.

Besides CNN, everyone else would lose this war. Poor people would be the victims of the indiscriminate and heavy bombings. They would be paying heavy prices, more than anyone else. People around the world would likely lose sympathy for the cause of such a war. And the bad guys, if they were indeed hiding in those countries, would find easier ways to escape through the rubble, as they have likely done so in Afghanistan.

One of the best and constructive ways to combat the threat of terrorism and to minimize its effects is by studying, analyzing, examining and evaluating the root causes of this problem. If we do not search for the root of the problem, everything else is a waste of time. As the President of Pakistan recently indicated, it would be like cutting a leaf from a tree. The leaf that is cut would soon be replaced by other leaves and the tree would continue growing.

If Bin Laden was successful to win the hearts of few confused followers, the US could win more by spreading justice and helping the helpless around the world. It could win the support and the hearts of people around the globe by showing them that it always stands for justice and helping the needy and poor.

Certainly, there are times when war is the only solution in order for justice to prevail. But war is not and cannot be justified when the enemy is not easily seen. One should not bomb the house that is full of people – including children – just because it is suspected that a thief is hiding in the house.

Abubakar N. Kasim

The Roles of the Masjid

Humanity in its diverse history has known many places of worship, but the places' use was usually restricted to one or two roles. The mosque is unique among the places of worship, for it serves many roles for the Muslim community around it.

It is not a building where Muslims would only pray five times a day. It is a building that the whole life of the Muslim community revolves around and as we shall see this was the role of the mosque during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his successors.

The nascent Muslim community, for the sake of Allah (SWT), donated the first mosque that the Prophet (peace be upon him) built in Madinah. After living in Madinah for fifteen days, the Prophet (peace be upon him) selected the location; an orchard owned by Bani al-Najjar, the clan of his late mother. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) called them, they thought that he had called them to defend Madinah, so they came in full battle gear. However the Prophet (peace be upon him) wanted them for another matter. He said to them, "I want to buy your land." They asked, "Why?" and the Prophet (peace be upon him) told them, "I want to build a mosque. So tell me how much you want." Their answer showed their sincerity and readiness for internal *Jihad*, to combat the inner greed of the human nature, "We shall not sell it for money to you. We shall sell it to Allah (SWT). We will give it for the sake of his pleasure."

The first mosque in Islam was a very modest building. It was built of the trunks of the palm trees and the ceiling was made of the branches of the palm trees. About twenty years later Uthman, the third Caliph, wanted to expand the crowded mosque and build the mosque of stones. People looked at this as a change to what the Prophet (peace be upon him) had laid down. Uthman, besides being among the wealthiest, was also prominent in his piety and understanding of Islam, and he answered them "I'll pay for it from my own wealth. I won't ask the treasury for any penny, for I heard the Prophet (peace be upon him), saying, 'Whoever builds a mosque for Allah (SWT), Allah (SWT) shall build him a palace in Paradise.'"

A Place of Worship The first role of the mosque is that of a place of worship, where everyone would go on a daily basis. Muslims are required to pray, if they can, each of the 5 prayers in the mosque in congregation *(jama')*. This is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "A prayer in *jama'* will be rewarded twenty-seven times the reward of a prayer performed alone." This is because congregational prayers enhance our personal spirituality, reinforce our Islamic identity and cement our social relationship. Allah (SWT), describes in the Quran, the rewards and characteristics of those who frequent the mosque – those who inhabit the mosques of Allah (SWT):

Those who frequent mosques are those who truly believe in Allah (SWT) and the Hereafter, and they establish regular prayers, and pay their alms (zakaat), and fear none except Allah (SWT). Then perhaps they are among the rightly guided ones.
[Quran, 9:18]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said in another hadith, "*If you see a person frequenting the mosque, then you testify that he is a believer in Allah (SWT).*" It was not in vain that the Prophet (peace be upon him), when he told us the seven types of people that Allah (SWT) shall give shade on the Day of Judgement – when there is no shade but the shade of Allah (SWT), – one among them is a man whose heart is always linked to the mosque.

A Place of Learning The second role of the mosque in Islam is that of a place of learning. For centuries, mosques served as schools or *madrasas* in Muslim centuries. This comes naturally since Islam is inseparable from the quest of knowledge. At every Muslim community, we see that after establishing a mosque, a school is established within it or around it. Islam is the religion of knowledge and it is part of the Muslims' faith to seek knowledge. It is a religion that asked humanity to reflect, to ponder, to use the mind; not to close it. The first verse revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), asked him to read, "*iqra*". It was natural for such a religion to establish schools and the Prophet's (peace be upon him) mosque was no exception. The companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), used to gather at the mosque reciting the Quran, studying Islam, and learning from each other.

The Prophet (peace be upon him), in a hadith, told us of the reward for the people who would meet at the mosque. "*Every time a group would meet in the house of Allah (SWT), to study the Book of Allah (SWT); the angels will gather around them, and tranquility and mercy will be showered upon them from Allah (SWT).*" So another role of the mosque as we see in every Muslim community is that it is place of learning,of radiating knowledge and piety and guiding the

whole community to the way of Allah (SWT).

Government Office A third role of the mosque that we see during the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is that of the government court. It was where the Prophet (peace be upon him), would receive emissaries from other tribes and regions. For example, when the Christians of Najran in Southern Arabia sent a delegation of priests to the Prophet (peace be upon him), he received them at the mosque. They were his guests for few days in a tent propped in the mosque. In the mosque, he discussed with them his faith and the origin of Islam, and they were able to observe him and the Muslims practising their religion. This is a role that the Muslims generally have neglected. But many Muslim centres are reviving this by calling non-Muslims to the mosque for themselves to see how the Muslims are practicing their religion.

Treasury The fourth role of the mosque during the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was that of the Muslim treasury. The money that came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) would be stored in a room adjacent to the mosque and it would be distributed in the mosque. This laid down the principle of transparency in handling the state resources. Imam Bukhari narrated a hadith that at one time the Prophet (peace be upon him) got alms money from Al-Bahrain (now Al-Ahsa in Eastern Arabia). The poor among the Ansar were waiting for this money to come. So when the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to the dawn *(fajr)* prayer, at the Madinah mosque, they all came to the mosque, looking and waiting for the Prophet (peace be upon him). The merciful Prophet (peace be upon him) understood the unasked question and he said to them, "You are waiting for me to distribute the money." The Ansar said, "Yes, Prophet (peace be upon him), we are really in need." Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) brought all the money in front of them and distributed it all – nothing remained, and everyone left very happy and content.

A Banquet Hall Celebrations were done at the mosque in the days of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Aishah (radi'Allahu 'anhu), the wife of the Prophet (peace be upon him), narrated that on the day of Eid, the Abyssinians, famous for their prowess with spears (remember Wahshi?), came to the mosque to join the festivities of the Eid and to play with spears. Standing behind the Prophet (peace be upon him), she looked at them from her room with the Prophet (peace be upon him) cheering them. Weddings or *Nikahs* were done at the mosque. The people of Makkah and Madinah till our days are keen to have their wedding agreements, *Nikah*, in the two holy mosques to get the blessing of these sacred places.

A Prison The Prophet (peace be upon him) used the mosque in another type of role, again not very far from calling people to Islam. When he had prisoners of war, he would put them in the mosque or in a place adjacent to the mosque. When Saffana, the daughter of the Arab chieftain Hatam al-Taiee, was taken as a prisoner with her tribe, they were put, not in a concentration camp, but, in a fenced plot at the entrance of the mosque. There they would see the Prophet (peace be upon him) coming into and going back out of the mosque. She was able to plead with him and he ultimately freed her and her tribe with unsurpassed generosity. He gave her his mantle and told her to consult with him before leaving to join her brother who fled to the Romans in Syria.

Another hadith tells us that a prisoner of war, Thumama ibn Uthal was tied to a column of the mosque of the Prophet (peace be upon him) for three days. During these three days, he was able to watch the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions practicing their religion and attending to their affairs. He was able to see, without the influence of prejudice and misperception, the overwhelmingly merciful and generous nature of the Prophet (peace be upon him). At the end of these three days the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered his companions, "Free the prisoner for I have pardoned him." The man left the mosque but his heart remained there. He went outside and did an ablution, then he came back to the Prophet (peace be upon him) declaring "There is no God but Allah and that Mohammad is the last messenger of Allah", thereby joining the ranks of the Muslims. This is because he realised, by watching the Muslims for three days, that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was not an impostor but indeed the Prophet of Allah (SWT). After the Prophet's (peace be upon him) death, when his tribe joined the renegades, he remained faithful to Islam and Muslims.

These are some of the roles of the mosque in Islam. In Canada, many centres are reviving these roles, making the mosque the focal point of the whole community. This is indeed something that Allah (SWT) will reward us for in the hereafter. However, some reward will materialize while we are living on Earth. As a community, we'll enjoy a sense of unity, social interaction and will be able to guide and assist each other. As individuals we'll enjoy the title of a believer, that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave to those whose lives revolve around the mosque. This is not an easy title to gain because there is Islam and there is *Iman*. Here, the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave the higher title, *Iman* – The unshakable belief in God and his messenger supplanted by piety and righteous deeds. *Iman* is what we really need to deeply enroot in our hearts and we can achieve this by coming to the mosque and performing not only our

"In fact, religion experts say Islam is the second-largest religion in the United States... Islam has 5 million to 6 million members, followed by Judaism, with approximately 4.5 million..... And Islam is believed to be fastest-growing religion in the country, with half its expansion coming from new immigrants and the other half from conversions." ***Elsa C. Arnett***, Knight-Ridder News Service.

prayers but also many of the functions that were performed in the days of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Manners of Visiting the Mosque For every place we visit we have to follow certain manners and, the house of Allah (SWT) is no exception; it should be honoured more than any other place. When visiting a home we dress our best and try to be polite, in the best of manners. Our manners in the house of Allah (SWT) should be the best of manners.

The first is to put the best dress when we go to the house of Allah (SWT). This is to fulfill the orders from Allah (SWT), *"Oh sons of Adam, go to the mosque with the best of shape." [Quran, 7:31]*

The second requirement when we go to the mosque is to pray two *rakaats*, called *Tahiyyat al-Masjid*, as a greeting to the mosque you enter as was the practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Is it a greeting to the walls or stones? No, it is a greeting to Allah (SWT) to tell Him that you came to His house seeking His help. For whatever one's needs are, He will fulfill them. All of this you can do with these two *rakaats* and the prayers that would follow later.

It is also the practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him), as narrated by Abdullah ibn Umar, to enter the mosque with the right foot and to leave with the left foot. Many of us need to be aware of this practice and a Muslim should try to imitate the Prophet (peace be upon him) in all religious aspects.

Another aspect of the manners is to come to the mosque to do *Itikaf* or temporary seclusion for contemplation. This is done by many of us during the month of Ramadan but by very few outside of Ramadan. *Itikaf* is preferred and recommended strongly during Ramadan but it can be done at any time during the year. Indeed it would be good to revive this practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him) all along the year – to stay for a few hours at night or a few days, if you can, at the mosque.

What is the purpose of this? The purpose of this is to detach yourself from the materialistic nature of this life and to reflect on your relationship with Allah (SWT). It could be used to put your life and your plans for the future in a proper perspective. This will come when you recite the Quran inside the mosque and when you review the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him). When we read the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him), our hearts will indeed become open to the message of Allah (SWT), and to the light of guidance. We shall see, by the grace of Allah (SWT), tranquility in our lives, and a spiritual light radiating around us.

Shaikh Mohammad Zahid

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The Big Four.....
continued from page 9

4 Imam Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hanbal:

-He was born in Marw on the 20th Rabi al-Awwal of the Islamic calendar in the year 164 A.H.
-While still an infant he was brought to Baghdad where his father died.
-He was an inquisitive and intelligent child, keenly interested in furthering his education.
-At 16 years of age (179 A.H.) he began his study of *Hadith* (sayings of the Prophet [*PBUH*]) literature.
-Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmad met in Baghdad in 199 A.H. and are said to have had a special attachment and respect for one another. Imam Shafi'i is said to be Imam Ahmad's most important teacher.
-In the later years of his life, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal was imprisoned for a long time and treated harshly due to him challenging religious authority.
-He was thrown in a prison in Baghdad for nearly thirteen months, where he was kept in heavy chains, in a cell with no light.
-On the 25th of Ramadan in the Islamic calendar in year 221 A.H. the punishment was stopped and chains removed.
-Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal had written many books. However, his work ended when he died in 241 A.H.

By the end of the ninth century AD, the four major Sunni schools had come to support to a common theory, that is to say that the primary sources of Islamic law are:

1. The Qur'an
2. The Sunnah (example of the Prophet [peace be upon him])
3. The juristic consensus of opinion
4. Reasoning by analogy

Reference: Shar'iah the Islamic Law by 'Abdur Rhman I.Doi
(The above is a summary of his writings on the four schools of thought)

Shireen Patel

Entertainment

J	Z	M	L	M	W	M	K	H	R	V	L	H	K	W	G	K	S	J	K
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L	S	U	M	A	Y	Y	A	H	B	I	N	T	K	H	A	B	A	T	N

~WORDSEARCH~
"GREAT WOMEN OF ISLAM"

1. SUMAYYAH BINT KHABAT (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
2. ZAINAB BINT KHAZEEMAH (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
3. FAREEAH BINT MALIK (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
4. AISHAH (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
5. FATIMA BINT ASAD (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
6. UMM ROOMAN (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
7. SAFIYYAH BINT HUYAYEE (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
8. FATIMA BINT MUHAMMAD (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
9. UMM SALAMAH (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
10. HAFSAH BINT UMAR (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
11. KHADIJAH (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
12. SAUDAH BINT ZAMAH (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
13. ZAINAB BINT JAHASH (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
14. JUWAYRIAH BINT HARITH (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
15. UMM AIMAN (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)

Hints for crossword

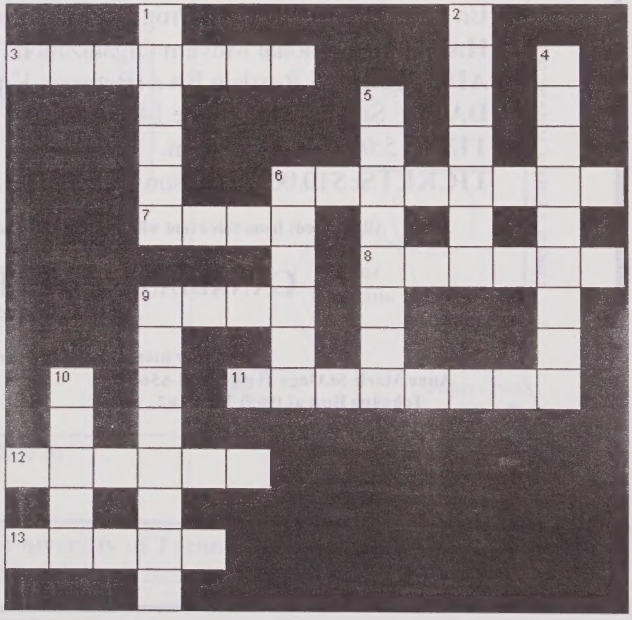
Across

3. The month of fasting.
6. The first month of the Islamic Calendar.
7. The cave where the Quran was first revealed.
8. The angel through whom the Quran was revealed.
9. Islam forbids this cloth for males.
11. Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) first wife.
12. The angel of death.
13. Submission, surrender, obedience.

Down

1. Maryam's (alaihis salam) mother.
2. Prayers at sunset.
4. The opening surah of the Quran.
5. Late night prayers.
6. The city where the Kaaba is located.
9. The first pillar of Islam.
10. The son of Maryam (alaihis salam).

** Solutions on p. 14 **



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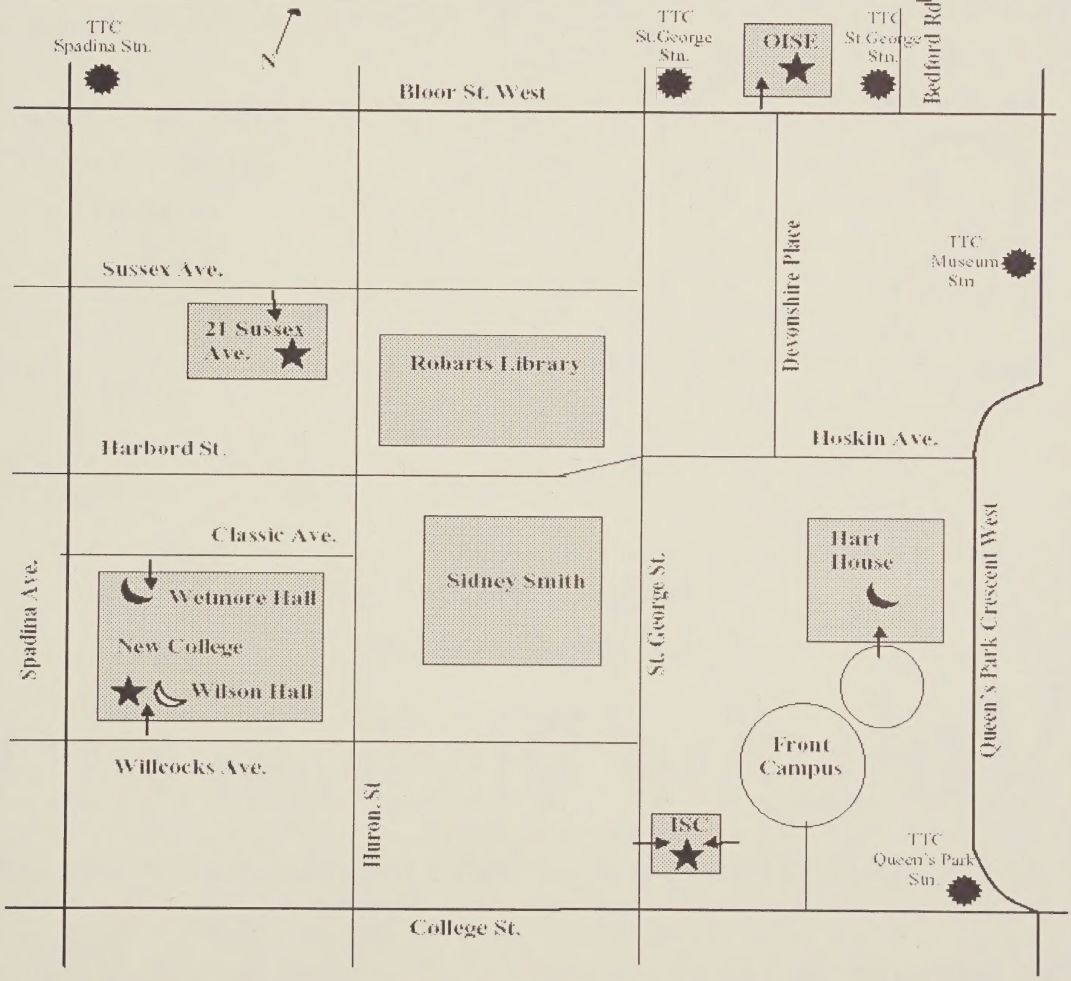
- **Wilson Hall, New College** - 40 Willcocks St., Basement
- **OISE** - 252 Bloor St.W., 8th floor, room 136
- **21 Sussex Ave.** - 5th floor, room 508

☾ Main Jumuah Prayer Location, 1-2pm *(one of these two locations):*
- **Wetmore Hall, New College** - 300 Huron St., Wetmore Hall
- **Hart House** - 7 Hart House Circle, 2nd floor, Debates Room *(during Fall and Spring session exams, and during the summer. Exact switch date posted on website noted below).*

☾ Alternate Jumuah Prayer Location:
- **Wilson Hall, New College** - 40 Willcocks St., Basement, Prayer room *(check website for latest)*



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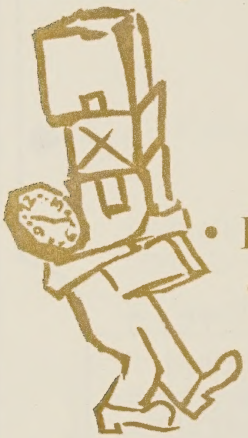

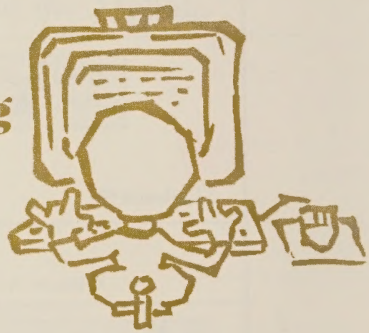

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